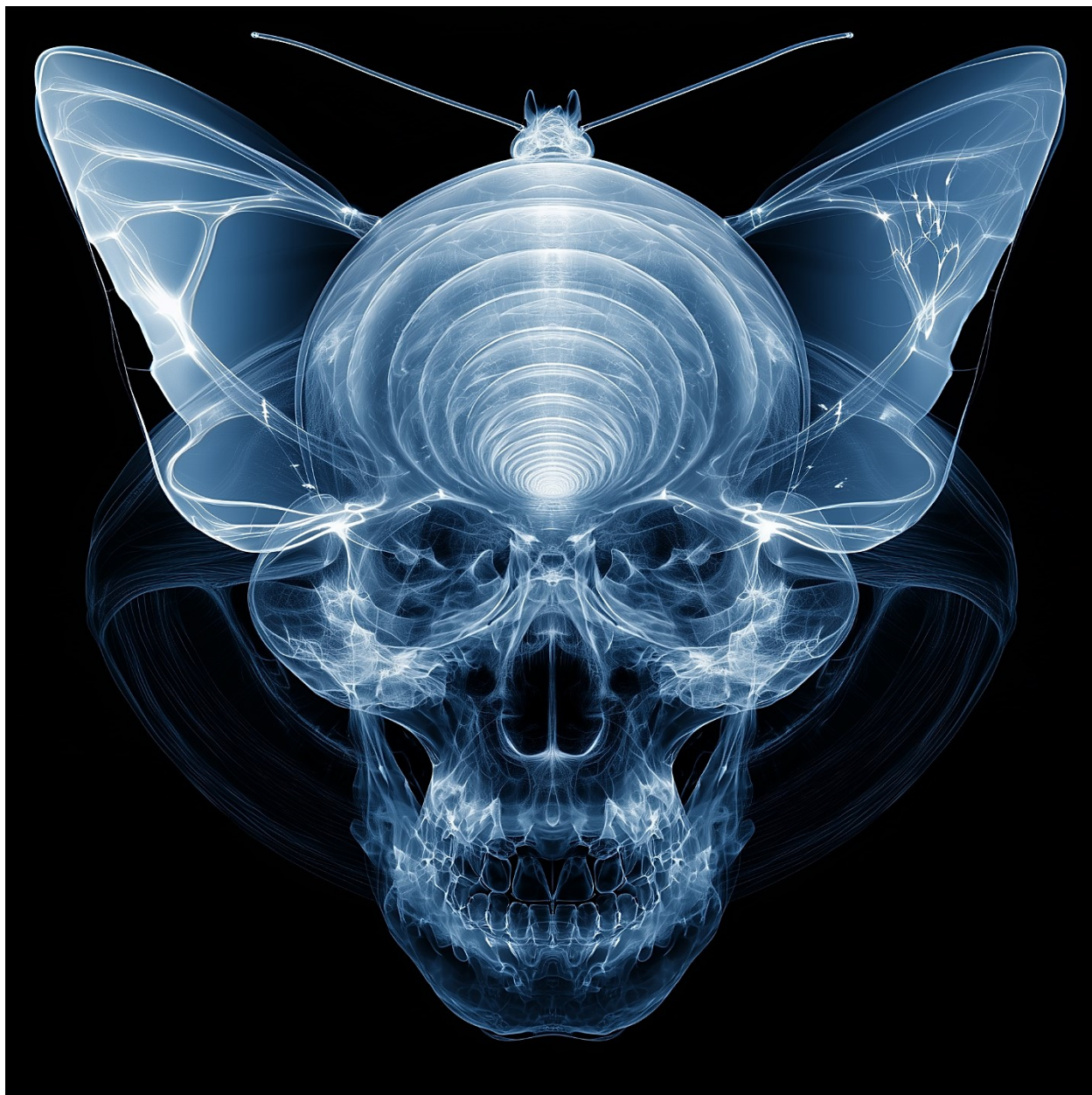




Out-of-Body Experiences and Hippocampal Activity Under Anesthesia

By J. Martin Strangeweather

The following passage was published in *Notes Concerning Eternity, part thirteen: The Psychophysiology of Out-of-Body Experiences* on May 3, 2025:

“What makes you think your imagination can’t simulate the surroundings of an OBE with near-perfect accuracy, factoring in information such as the sound of an ambulance coming to aid you, or the scent of someone drawing near you to check your pulse for signs of life, or the coldness of the operating table just before the anesthesia kicks in, or faintly discerned conversations between the surgeon and nurse as they try to resuscitate you? Before you tell me that anesthesia blocks access to all conscious sensory data, I would rather entertain the thought that anesthesia *doesn’t block out all sensory data in all cases* than jump to the conclusion that we have identities which can perceive bodily sensations (such as sight and sound) without the medium of bodies” [1].

Several of my most loyal critics objected, claiming there was no way for even a modicum of sensory data to get through the mind-deadening effects of anesthesia. It should be noted that none of my most loyal critics are neuroscientists; all of them are diehard spiritualists who tend to be more concerned with defending their beliefs than searching for the truth. Now here we are a year later and current research published in *Nature* [2] is confirming the validity of my reasoning.

It has long been thought that our conscious mind shuts off under general anesthesia, but researchers in Texas found that regions of the human brain associated with conscious awareness remain active under general anesthesia—the hippocampus continues to process sounds, words, and even conversations, although it is extremely rare for patients to remember these experiences after waking up.

“Scientists have discovered that the hippocampus, a deep-brain structure that plays a role in memory and spatial navigation, continues to listen, learn, and predict the meaning of words while a person is completely anesthetized. ‘The hippocampus, over millions of years of evolution, became so specialized in taking this information in and parsing it into a useful structure that it’s doing this without awareness,’ explains Sameer Anil Sheth, a neurosurgery professor at the Baylor College of Medicine and co-senior author of the study [...] To test this hypothesis, the researchers recruited seven people who were scheduled for an anterior temporal lobectomy.” The patients were anesthetized intravenously with propofol. “While the patients were under general anesthesia, surgeons temporarily inserted thin probes into their hippocampus. These probes, called Neuropixels, allowed scientists to eavesdrop on the electrical signals produced by hundreds of individual neurons at once. [...] Overall, language processing in the anesthetized hippocampus worked much like it does in an awake one” [3].

The study provides clear evidence that while under anesthesia, the brain continues to analyze the surrounding environment, with specific neurons firing in recognition of particular sounds and words, lending support to my original claim regarding awareness under anesthesia, as well as the eidetic afterlife hypothesis in general.

References

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2. Katlowitz, K.A., Cole, E.R., Mickiewicz, E.A. et al. Plasticity and language in the anaesthetized human hippocampus. *Nature* (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-026-10448-0>
3. The Brain Processes Overheard Words Under Anesthesia—but It May Not Remember Them. (2024). *Scientific American*. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-brain-processes-overheard-words-under-anesthesia-but-it-may-not-remember-them/>